

Today in World Affairs

European Experts Warn: Go Easy on C.I.A. Changes

By David Lawrence

EN ROUTE FROM EUROPE

They know a lot more in Western Europe about intelligence work than we do in America. This is because they have been at it longer.

Hence, it was rather disquieting to have some of the European officials who are most experienced in intelligence activities say privately that they are worried about the future of the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington, which up to now has been a bulwark of strength in its co-operation with European governments.

Oddly enough, they wonder how so much got into print about the C. I. A. and why American officials haven't learned that judgment of intelligence work cannot be fairly based on one episode like the Cuban affair. They suspect that inexperience and possibly a desire by other agencies in Washington to shift the blame led to the controversy over the future functioning of the C. I. A.

Perhaps one of the most skillful of the European intelligence executives told this writer the other day that every intelligence organization can be improved, but that, in trying to make this type of setup conform to other units in government, there is danger of actually impairing the C. I. A.'s usefulness.

He asked this correspondent, for instance, what was going to be done with all the information locked up in the mind of Allen Dulles when he "retires" at the end of this year.

Rightly or wrongly, intelligence experts do not favor putting everything down on paper for the record. It involves too many risks. Hence, they say a top intelligence man should be utilized as long as he is able to function, even when "retired."

Roots Take Long Time

About thirty years ago, when this writer first began to talk to intelligence officials in Europe, he found them predicting that the United States might in the course of twenty-five years or so achieve an effective intelligence operation. It takes a long time to plant the roots of intelligence work so that the sources cannot be detected by the enemy.

Today some of the higher level men in foreign governments express admiration for the progress that has been made by the United States in the last twenty years. In fact,

admiration for the achievements of Allen Dulles. This does not mean that they criticize the reported plans for reorganization which have been mentioned in the American press lately. Some of these specialists in Europe say reforms are long overdue in all intelligence activity—especially in relation to the public's understanding of the work.

In the first place, it is pointed out, 95 per cent of all the information gathered is what is known as "overt." This is a vast job of analysis of information that is derived from a close reading of newspapers, magazines, radio speeches and interviews, as well as trade journals of a business or scientific nature. As one expert put it: "You would be surprised at the enormous amount of information which is available to the Russians by studying our publicly reported material."

But even such data as become available to the West-

ern side from behind the Iron Curtain—newspapers, speeches, scientific journals and the like—must be subjected not just to a translation by some clerk. This must be done by language experts who understand the ambiguities of expression and the spirit of a speaker's remarks. Thus, one intelligence official pointed out to this writer that he doubted whether an accurate analysis of the latest Communist party platform had as yet been published anywhere and that several expert translators would be necessary to do such a job.

Fete Shows How

In the realm of the so-called "covert" operations, very little is disclosed by intelligence officials to anybody except certain of their own government officials. They don't like to talk about methods or techniques—which is natural. But in a recent issue of "Life" magazine a onetime high-ranking Polish espionage agent—now a defector to the West reveals how easy it was for him and his fellow agents to pick up information from talkative scientists, workmen at factories, and even gossiping military officers inside the United States.

There is need, of course, for specialists—those who understand the requirements, for instance, of the military services. These investigators, who deal with the gathering of vital information for the armed services, can be under separate agencies coordinated in a Department of Defense. There is no argument on that point.

But when it comes to ways of frustrating the espionage carried on by the Communists through their own embassies and legations throughout the world and the activities of the Communist party units stationed everywhere—all financed by Moscow—this is a tremendous problem. It means a vast personnel of counter-espionage, and the results are often disappointing as well as expensive.

Every major government has to prepare itself for the reverses that occur in intelligence work. For all too often one's own agent is bought or compromised in some way by the other side.

Most of the intelligence folks with whom this writer talked in Europe are curious about what happened in Cuba as far as the CIA was concerned, though they have formed their own conclusions about that affair. But, above all, this correspondent was impressed with the observation made to him repeatedly that it would be a mistake for the American government to go off half-cocked and reorganize drastically its intelligence set-up and take the risk of turning back the clock in respect to America's intelligence achievements during the last decade or more.

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